WRL News

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Peace Movements in the Middle East

By Joseph Gerson

The occasional speaking tour of Israelis or Palestinians or an obscure news item originating in Beirut is all the contact most of us have with the peace movements of the Middle East. Yet, with their lives on the line, and their peoples facing more immediate questions of war, death and survival than we do in the United States, their struggles are of fundamental importance. They deserve our understanding and support.

In the United States the best known Israeli peace organization is Peace Now organized in 1978 in response to President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Begin the three hundred reserve army officers who founded the organization wrote that if there was to be another Arab-Israeli war they wanted to be certain every avenue for peace had been explored. When Prime Minister Begin departed for the negotiations at Camp David, Peace Now brought together 50,000 people to press for concessions, on exchange of land for peace. Peace Now has been through many changes since 1978. It continued to educate, mobilize and demonstrate until land (the Sinai) was exchanged for peace with Egypt. In the intervening years, until the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Peace Now focused its energies on the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but was not fully able to mobilize its constituency. Many who had demonstrated for peace with Egypt identified with the Labor Party and had ambiguous feelings about the best way forward in the conflict with the Palestinians. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon revitalized Peace Now. In response to the massacres at Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps it turned out an estimated 400,000 people to protest these atrocities.

The commitments of Peace Now have changed little since 1978. It calls for a compromise between Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews. It sees the construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories as obstacles to peace. The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, they believe, threatens rather than enhances Israeli security. Peace Now calls for direct negotiations with every country or representatives of every movement which recognizes the right of Israel to exist, leaving open the possibility of a role for the PLO in such negotiations. To hold together a diverse movement and to avoid alienating the movement from the larger Israel society Peace Now has taken the calculated position of neither opposing nor advocating the creation of a Palestinian State in the Occupied Territories. The glue which holds the movement together is the belief that the occupation and domination of the Palestinian people is corrupting Israelis and the Jewish State. Soldiers, settlers, politicians, police and administrators cannot leave the lessons learned in imposing the occupation at the Green Line (Israel's 1967 pre-war boundary) when they return home.

Peace Now's successes have won it a level of respectability which its leaders believe it cannot afford to risk through public failures. Consequently the difficult and risky work of experimentation is left to smaller, less well endowed groups. (No Israeli peace organization, unfortunately, has the margin or base to address Israel's growing role in Central America and South Africa.) The one exception has been Peace Now's work in building ties with Sephardic Jews. Like the United States, the Israeli peace movement has been afflicted by a "color" line. For the most part the movement has been the domain of Ashkenazi Jews of European origin and has not spoken to the needs and concerns of Israel's second class Sephardic community (Jews who migrated or whose ancestors came from the Arab world). Some Sephardim, including a member of Jerusalem's city council, are beginning to protest the economic pressures placed on them to move from their homes to new sterile settlements in the Occupied Territories. They are also protesting the disproportionate investment

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WRL Honors Larry Gara With 23rd Annual Peace Award

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Ralph DiGia presenting scroll to Larry Gara. *Photo by David McReynolds.*

Middle East Peace Movements *continued from page 1*

in the settlements at the expense of their "neighborhoods."

The Israel Council for Israel Palestine Peace and the Committee Against the War in Lebanon (also known as the Committee Against Settlement in Hebron and the Committee in Solidarity with Bir Zeit University), are two of the more important groups on the cutting edge of the Israeli peace movement. Both believe that the only just and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires recognition of each people's right to self-determination, that this will require an end to the Israeli occupation of the lands conquered in 1967, and that peace will require negotiations between the Israeli govenment and the PLO.

The Council was formed in 1975 by progressive members of the Israeli elite in response to a speech calling for Palestinian coexistence with Israel given by the PLO Representative to London. After an exhaustive debate, the cabinet of the Labor Government of the time concluded that Israel should not respond to the Hammami speech. Believing it essential that Israelis reinforce these signals for cooperation coming from the enemy retired General Mattihayu Peled, publisher Uri Avnery, former Secretary General of the Labor Party Arie Fliov and others established the Council. They published a manifesto which clearly stated their committment to a Zionist Israel, but which also stated their belief that the Palestinians are entitled to exercise the same right to self-determination. They published the manifesto in six languages, to ensure it would not be missed ty the PLO. This in turn led to a decade of dialogue between these activists and the leadership of the PLO.

Two of the more daring activities of the Council were Uri Avnery's meeting with Yasir Arafat in Beirut during the Israeli siege of the city and his publication of their dialogue in the Israeli and international press. This was followed by a meeting between the Council's leadership and Yasir Arafat immediately prior to the last Palestine National Council (the Palestinians parliament in exile). This meeting provided Arafat a way to demonstrate his willingness to negotiate a peace agreement with Israel.

Though the Council has not limited itself to the world of quasi-diplomacy, the Committee Against the War in Lebanon and its associated committees have played the more activist role at the grass roots level. The Committee has organized within Israel and joined West Bank Palestinians in demonstrations to protest closures of West Bank universities by the military authorities. The Committee's early sit-in to protest Israeli settlements in downtown Hebron led to direct and continuing cooperation with West Bank Palestinian leadership. The Committee began the protest against the War in Lebanon when, on June 5, 1982, it transformed a rally against 15-years of military occupation into a protest against the impending war.

While there are a number of other peace organizations in Israel, including a small chapter of the War Resisters' International and religiously based organizations, Yesh Gvul should be briefly described here. The organization, whose name translates as "there is a limit" and "there is a border," began with a statement. This statement, like the one that initiated Peace Now, was signed by Israeli soldiers and said: "We have conquered and bombed and destroyed too much... a people's problem cannot be solved militarily... We were not conscripted in the Israel Defense Force for this purpose..." More than 2,000 Israeli soldiers have now signed the statement, pledging to refuse orders to serve in Lebanon. To date more than 115 signers have been jailed for their refusal to fight in Lebanon.

For every soldier who has openly refused to fight in Lebanon another ten to twenty are estimated to have found ways to avoid service. The military is said to have avoided ordering some units in which opposition exists to the continuing war to Lebanon. Given the central role the army plays in Israeli life and culture the refusal of these soldiers to serve is a greater challenge to the state than was Vietnam era draft resistance here in the United States. Like our draft resistance movement, Yesh Gval has won the respect of many Israelis who appreciate the risks taken by these war resisters. Like our opposition to the Indochina war, the emergence of Yesh Gvul reflects a growing understanding within Israel of the limitations of military force and a fundamental questioning of the integrity of the state.

A question frequently heard in the United States, and from some Peace Now activists, is "Where is the Palestinian equivalent of Peace Now?" While nonviolence has been the predominate form that Palestinian resistance has taken, in the occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golon Heights, this question presumes a similarity between the circumstances of Palestinians and Israelis that does not exist. Israelis have a state and they are the occupiers of a conquered people. The Palestinians have no state. Their lands and homeland are occupied. They suffer the immediate and brutal consequences of military occupation. The work of "peace activists" thus must be different in the communities of the occupied and the occupier.

In 1974 and 1975 what was then described as "the dominant trend" in the PLO began to assert itself. This was a commitment to a compromise peace settlement with Israel. Palestinian leaders came to this position from two directions. Some looked at the cruel realities. Like it or not Israel would continue to exist. Rather than lose all of historic Palestine, they would do better to accept a rump state in which Palestinians could live reasonably secure lives and future generations of Palestinians could flourish. Others, like the Marxist Naif Howatmeh, concluded that the Israelis, like the Palestinians, constitute a nation with the right to self-determination. The Palestine National Council thus signaled its willingness to create a small West Bank Gaza State which would coexist with Israel. In the decade since this decision was taken many leaders within the PLO including Said Hammami, Dr. Issam Sartawi (both of whom were subsequently assassinated almost certainly as a result of their commitment to coexistence) Sabri Jyiris, and Walid Khalidi, have struggled to see their vision come to fruition.

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How Shall We Relate To The Elections? Two Views.

To Vote, Perchance, to Vote By Wendy Schwartz

How wonderful it would be if just by walking to the polls and pulling the correct lever we could turn America around...

Well, change doesn't happen that easily, and many members of the War Resisters League don't believe that it ever happens at the polls. We have found that, given the usual cast of characters who masquerade as servants of the people, choosing among them is as frustrating as trying to find some hidden difference among rows of seemingly identical cardboard stand-ups. And moreover, as insulting as voting itself is, it seems even more humiliating soon after the election when the chosen candidate fails to keep even those insignificant promises which had given him (rarely, her) the edge over the others.

Still, for the first time, the WRL National Committee—by an overwhelming majority—is recommending that WRL members register and vote. The organization which for 61 years has had the courage and foresight to vigil, march, and break the law for peace and justice is now urging that radical pacifists take to the polls on these same issues. We have not shifted emphasis, reneged on our time-honored commitment to direct action, or made plans to move the national office to Washington. Rather, we have decided that if we are really determined to do all we can to make our dreams reality, we must do all we have been doing and this includes voting.

We have, in the last three years, learned that not all presidents are alike, and that the amount of damage a person in the White House can do is enormous. While no serious challenger to Ronald Reagan is likely to institute significant reforms, anyone who can just stop this country's rush to the right is better than he is.

In his first term, Reagan has been spectacularly successful in converting his politics into policy. With the support of a conservative Congress he helped to elect, and through countelss appointments to federal agencies, he has raised the military budget to an unconscionable level, damaged severely relations with the Russians, begun an imperialist venture into Central America, slashed human services so drastically that more people are hungry in America than in any time since the Depression, curtailed hardwon civil rights for minorities and civil liberties for everyone, rescinded environmental protection legislation and regulations, and decimated every agency which protects public welfare. And he has done all this with an administration which took lessons on integrity from Richard Nixon.

If Reagan wins a second term, he will perceive an even greater public mandate and will thus push his programs even harder. As he attempts to produce his Star Wars weapons system and steps up production of other military hardware, at the expense of consumer production, the economy will again decline; inflation and unemployment will skyrocket. (This, of course, is the effect opposite to that of economic conversion.) And because Reagan's relations with the Soviet Union will continue to decline, the likelihood of using those high tech weapons will increase. In the next four years there will probably be two vacancies on the Supreme Court; if they are filled with Reagan conservatives, the Court will be lost as a recourse for progressives for at least a decade. Making this loss even more significant is the likelihood that Reagan will begin dismantling the watchdog agencies whose independence he has already undermined. There will be no federal government departments left to pro-

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Push Issues, Not Levers By Murray Rosenblith

The national committee meeting in February this year opened with a Friday evening discussion of the League's relationship to the 1984 presidential elections. Many members of the national committee expressed concern about the League's general policy of not getting involved in elections. Some felt we were missing an opportunity to make connections with other groups by not getting involved in the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign. This was, of course, before the now famous "Hymie" remarks dampened some of these enthusiasms.

Political activists, including many WRL members, have been active in local Jackson campaign efforts around the country. They are correctly excited by the coalition, yes, something of a "rainbow" that we've all tried so hard to achieve over the years, that the Jackson campaign has brought together. They felt that Jackson's campaign was giving the cause of peace an entry into the black and Third World community that it has not had since Martin Luther King, Jr. was alive. There was some concern that the League might "miss the boat" if we did not get involved in the campaign.

Others in the meeting hewed to the relatively traditional position that WRL should continue to avoid elections like the plague. That elections are the modern "bread and circuses" that come along every couple of years (and in a really big way every four years) and divert the energy and attention of groups working for social change.

The discussion seemed to revolve around these views and, of course, there was no particular resolution other than a statement noting that the majority of those present thought we should encourage people to register and vote. I was left feeling that this discussion missed the point entirely and I mentioned that; that's how I ended up writing this (I'll keep my big mouth shut in the future!).

I'd like to clarify where I'm coming at this question from: I consider myself an anarchist, but in recent years have come to feel that voting and certain kinds of elections are useful for both educational and programatic benefits. I've even taken to voting myself sometimes. This applies entirely to local elections and referendum campaigns. It seems that the higher up in electoral activity one gets, the less useful it is, reaching a true dead-end in the presidential campaign. I've come to feel though that electing progressive people to local offices, including Congress, can make some difference in terms of stemming both local and national repression.

So, while I'm not opposed to elections, I don't think they're necessarily the best use of our time to advance the cause of peace and justice. The electoral process has its limits and working within it too much locks us into the achievement of limited gains.

Also, the League is not so harmonious a group that we could possibly contemplate organizational unity around a particular candidate. People tend to think of WRL as a family of conscience and like any family, we can support a wide range of views within our ranks because of our basic shared belief in nonviolence and the good side of human nature.

For all its growth in recent years (for those who may not have realized, the League has increased its membership by about 50% in the last 3 years), we remain a group with limited resources and a responsibility to use

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To Vote. . . *continued from page 3*

tect our rights, our freedoms, our welfare, or our natural resources.

It still might be possible, even reasonable, to assert that Congress will rediscover its spine and prevent war, and that the above scenario would be undone in due course by a future administration, just as Reagan is now taking back all the New Deal and subsequent liberal programs. And it might make sense to point out that the Democrats, too, have long championed third world adventurism and have been known to grossly overspend in the Pentagon toy shop, and that Congressional efforts to end the war in Indochina were ultimately bi-partisan.

But what is not reasonable is to tell the poor here in America that they should sit tight for "this too shall pass." *They may not survive the next four years.* Nor is it reasonable to tell minorities and women that they must stay disenfranchised just a little bit longer. *They have already waited too long for too little, and the Reagan Administration is now demanding givebacks.* If we truly believe that a commitment to disarmament cannot be separated from a commitment to justice, then we owe it to the homeless, the unemployed, the working poor—and their children and aged parents—to try to get them relief now. Further, if we are serious about wanting to broaden the peace movement to include other segments of society besides the white middle class, we must demonstrate that our concern about racial and economic issues is as urgent as our concern about disarmament, and that we understand that death from poverty and suffering from injustice are no more acceptable to pacifists than are the tragedies of war.

Obviously, simply voting, even for a totally respected candidate, will not generate the sweeping changes needed in this country. We need to be creative and courageous, and organize educational campaigns, mass legal demonstrations, civil disobedience, and as many other different kinds of actions as we can think of and get people to participate in. But we also must vote—because it is easy, because it might help, and because people trying to free themselves from the shackles Reagan has placed on them can't wait while we stand by until the revolution comes along.

Voting in the presidential election would feel less like a violation of our pacifist beliefs if there were a candidate with a platform we supported. In 1980, for example, some of us campaigned for David McReynolds who ran for president on the Socialist Party ticket. "Where have you gone, David McReynolds, our nation turns its lonely eyes to you." But, alas, in 1984 neither Joltin' Dave nor any other person committed to nonviolence is running. so, if we are to try to alleviate the pain of Reagan's victims, we must grit our teeth and choose the lesser of the evils—a candidate even slightly more humane than Reagan, a challenger who can beat him. This is not to suggest that we leave our principles home on Election Day. They will be with us as we go to the polls together—on leaflets, on banners, on our teeshirts. We should make it clear to whoever gets our vote that we are not giving a blanket endorsement, that, rather, the pressure is just beginning. The occupant of the White House needs to be put on notice that he is only a visitor there, for the House belongs to the people, and everyone knows how tough landlords can be.

Wendy Schwartz is a member of the WRL Executive Committee. She lost her electoral virginity in 1972 when she voted for George McGovern for president.

WRL Protests Armed Forces Day Parade in New York City

Members of New York City WRL joined with the Women's Pentagon Action in May to protest the annual display of militarism thru the streets of New York City. Just before the parade (which is sponsored by the Military Order of the World Wars) passed the reviewing stand in front of the NYC Public Library on fashionable Fifth Avenue, protesters stepped out onto the street and sat down in front of it. The parade was held up as demonstrators were removed by the police and placed under arrest for disorderly conduct. Unfortunately, Mayor Koch, who was riding in the cockpit of an F-16 Fighter plane this year (last year he was in a tank) was in the back of the parade and missed this demonstration of conscience by residents of the city. In all, 23 people were arrested, including WRL staffers Karl Bissinger, Ed Hedemann and Susan Pines, plus members of the NYC WRL Local. At a court appearance in June, the defendants asked the judge to dismiss the case on the grounds that it would have been wrong for us, considering the nature of the arms race and US intervention in Central America, to not have made some protest. She must have agreed. Case dismissed.

Photo by Tony Yarus

Stop U.S. Intervention in Central America!

The foreign policy of the Reagan Administration was put on "trial" for its war against Central America and the Caribbean on June 7th and 9th in New York City. On June 7th, more than 500 demonstrators blockaded the Federal Building which houses the offices of the CIA, the Defense Department, the State Department, the INS, FBI and other Federal agencies. Using their bodies to serve an "injunction" against the government's continued intervention, protesters sat in at all the entrances to the building. By the end of the day, 305 people had been arrested. On Saturday, June 9th, 10,000 turned out for a spirited march and a rally at the Times Square Recruiting Station. The two-day event was sponsored by the Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and The Caribbean, of which WRL is a founding member.

Top Left: The march to the Federal Building. ***Top Right:*** *National Lawyer's Guild Affinity Group blockading one of the entrances.* ***Bottom Left:*** *The WRL Affinity Group blockaded the driveway entrance to the building.* ***Bottom Right:*** *NYC police used stretchers to remove demonstrators.*

Photos by Grace Hane Hedemann.

A Family Affair

By Grace Hane Hedemann

It was a family affair on May 6th at St. Joseph's Church in New York City. Actually more like a special holiday held once a year where the WRL family gathers *off* the picket line for an evening of fun, laughter, music and good food. Over one hundred people attended this year.

"On the Lam Street Band" played Dixieland. Sybil Claiborne coordinated the "pot luck" dinner. Linnea Capps chaired the program. Norma Becker gave a rousing fund appeal. Lynne Coffin urged us to get our friends out for the June 7 and 9 Central America civil disobedience action and march in New York City. Larry Gara was presented the 23rd Annual WRL Peace Award.

The food was wonderful, an international smorgasbord. We had Lithuanian pirogen, Chinese chicken, German potato salad, Italian polenta, and an eastern European kasha to name only a few dishes. For those of you who could not attend, Vera Williams shares her kasha recipe.

KASHA
Serves 3

1 cup course ground buckwheat groats (kasha)
1 egg, beaten slightly

Mix, until kasha is well coated. Saute in medium fry pan until each grain is dryish and separate. Be careful not to burn. Set aside.

1 lb. mushrooms, sliced including stems
2 cups water
1 onion, chopped
2 Tbsp. butter

Cook ½ mushrooms in water. Drain and set aside, saving the water. Saute quickly remaining mushrooms and onions in butter until slightly brown.

Combine all ingredients, including the water. Cover and simmer over medium heat for 12–15 minutes. Ready when all the water has been absorbed and the kasha is fluffy. Serve with either sour cream or yogurt.

It was an especially nice evening. The 61st anniversary of the League has become the year to honor our World War II resisters—39 years since the end of the war. "Against the Tide," the 1984 WRL Calendar, capsulizes the history of pacifist resistance during that time. What could be more appropriate than to honor Larry Gara with the 23rd Annual Award. Gara refused to register for World War II and later was jailed a second time for counseliing other young men about draft options. So, the evening became a time to honor resisters who inspire each new generation to follow their conscience and the strength to hold those convictions despite harassment and jail.

Larry wanted to share the night with his wife, Lenna Mae, a committed activist herself, who could not attend for family reasons. So, Larry traveled by bus from Ohio alone, but not alone in spirit. He is Chairman of the History Department at Wilmington College in Wilmington, Ohio. Larry is a very modest but articulate man. Matt Meyer, a public non-registrant, said a few words about the importance of older resisters providing a tradition for him to follow. Ralph DiGia, also a World War II resister, introduced Larry as a resister who never forgot about prisoners or prison conditions following his release. Ralph mentioned how many resisters vowed to never forget about the inequities of the institution. But Larry put those words into action by working for prison abolition. He edited the 1979 WRL Calendar, "While There Is A Soul in Prison." He wrote the "Prison Notes" column in *WIN* Magazine, and organized vigils at prisons over the years.

Gara in his acceptance speech commented how he was inspired by the resistance of Evan Thomas to World War I. Evan Thomas, besides being a World War I resister, doctor, and brother of Norman Thomas, was Chair of WRL during World War II. Evan, with other resisters, participated in prison hunger strikes, and came out unbroken, willing to continue to work for peace. Thomas was also a model for Larry because of his ability to mix professional work and peace activism.

Larry Gara. Photo by David McReynolds.

As Larry said, "If we can identify with the activists of the past we can see our own contributions with a clear perspective. Each of the earlier radical movements faced obstacles that seemed insurmountable at the time. yet they carried on their work and this would be a much worse world in which to live if they had given up."

Gara concluded his talk with a call to action, "We have a rich heritage but we cannot rest on our laurels. No action is too small. It all adds up. And no one is too young or too old to participate.

"Yet the draft remains as a very real threat to millions of our youth. The deviltry of the militarists sometimes seems to have no end, and neither must our resistance to it. We have a valuable resource, the community of nonviolent activists. We have a goal, a world without war. And we have, as David Dellinger said, more power, much more power than we know."

Grace Hane Hedemann is a WRL national staff member.

WRL NEWS

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WRL Statement of Purpose

The War Resisters League affirms that war is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive nonviolently for the removal of all causes of war.

I support this statement and wish to enroll as a member of the War Resisters League.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City_____State____Zip ____

Send to: War Resisters League
339 Lafayette St.
New York, NY 10012

Ralph Templin Remembered

Ralph Templin, one of our foremost American nonviolent activists, died at his home in Cedarville, Ohio on May 2, 1984 at the age of 88. Following a time of World War I military service, Ralph turned to missionary work, where he served in India from 1925 until 1940. There he met and fell under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, whose cause of Indian independence he fully supported. In 1940, for his public stand for the nonviolent Indian independence movement, Ralph and his wife, Lila, were expelled from India.

After his return to the United States he was, for three years, the director of the School of Living at Suffern, New York, where he continued a lifelong interest in organic gardening and homesteading as a basis for nonviolent living. In 1946 he received a doctorate from Columbia Teachers' College. He and his family moved to Yellow Springs, Ohio where he worked with Arthur E. Morgan and his Community Service organization. After teaching one year at Wilmington College, Ralph Templin was appointed professor of sociology at predominantly black Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. He was the first white professor in that school and became departmental chairman before his retirement in 1962. He also edited and wrote for the *Journal of Human Relations*.

Ralph's activism covered the fields of civil rights, nonviolence and anti-imperialism. He was quiet, gentle and loving, yet firm in his convictions. He was a war tax refuser who never filed an income tax form. During World War II he refused to register for the draft, as did his son Lawrence, who served a prison term for his resistance. During the McCarthy era, Ralph and his wife Lila joined a group of 86 people who openly stated that they would refuse to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He participated in several fasts and many demonstrations, including several for Puerto Rican independence. His strong faith in nonviolence as a basis for democracy was discussed in his book *Democracy and Nonviolence*.

Ralph Templin will be sorely missed, but his spirit lives on and his influence continues. In *Democracy and Nonviolence* he wrote:

"The attempt to secure and extend freedom with armies and military bases, strategic encirclement, containment or alliances for defense is to surrender the dynamic force of a popular will which is, at long last, attaining the realization that such stratagems simply won't work. In a struggle to preserve democratic values, the use of force as a countermeasure to any opposition is ultimately a source of weakness. Nonviolence is ultimately a source of enormous creative strength."

Ralph Tempin is survived by his wife, Lila, a son Lawrence, three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

—**Larry Gara**

A Special Gift for Barbara Deming

Friends of Barbara Deming, who want to show their love for her and maybe even send a little healing energy to help in her recent fight with cancer, have come up with an idea that anyone can join in on. Barbara is concerned that her medical expenses this year will prevent her from putting money into the "Money For Women Fund" (a not-for-profit foundation she set up to give small grants to feminist writers, artists, theatre troups, musicians, photographers, etc.). The idea is to gather as many checks (large and small) as a cheering gift from all of us to keep her special fund going strong. If you'd like to be part of this special gift, make your tax deductible check payable to "Money For Women Fund" and send it to Morgana/MFWF, 207 Costal Highway, St. Augustine, FL 32084. Feel free to enclose a note for Barbara with your check.

War Resisters League/Southeast SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

October 12–14, 1984

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

You're invited to attend WRL/SE's Sotheastern Regional Conference from October 12–14, 1984 at Camp New Hope (20 minutes from Durham) in Chapel Hill, NC.

Cost is $35 which includes 6 meals, lodging and conference materials. There are reduced rates for children and day attenders. Limited number of scholarships are available.

This is an excellent opportunity for WRLers and friends to come together to strategize and socialize. Whether you're already an activist or just want to know what's going on in the southeast peace and social change movements, you're invited to attend. Write for a conference brochure to WRL/SE, 604 West Chapel Hill Street, Durham, NC 27701 or call 919-682-6374.

Push Issues...

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these resources in the best fashion. My feeling has been (and continues to be) that we've always been able to have the greatest effect by operating outside the system, forcing it, in a sense, to respond to our concerns. This takes many forms, including, but not limited to demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. It also includes giving support, with votes and other forms of organizing, to politicians and elected officials who are responsible to our concerns.

Election years are a good opportunity to raise issues. While modern elections tend to lack substance, the candidates will, from time-to-time, have to address true political concerns and their statements give us an entry into the political discussion. Also, by using direct actions and organizing campaigns we can "motivate" candidates to move toward us politically.

The gist of what I'm saying comes down to a very simple notion: if we continue to do the hard work of long range organizing, forming and sustaining coalitions and campaigns, injecting our positions into the political forum, and building bridges to other constituencies, I believe we'll find that politicians respond to us, not the other way around. The electoral process, especially the presidential race, is where one bargains with a position, changing it to accommodate other forces in the electoral mix. Our strength comes from the clear and persistent articulation of our nonviolence and vision of a world of peace and justice.

We are not so powerful or pure that we can ignore opportunities to project our positions into political discussion; but we have little to gain by turning our primary energies into a process that we would enter with extremely feeble bargaining chips. We must be clear about the need for people involved in social change to make a continuing effort to set the political agenda and not to respond to someone else's.

So, of course, the League should encourage people to vote. It certainly can't hurt (assuming you're not pulling Reagan's lever) to spend whatever time it takes to cast a ballot. If someone with better politics than Reagan (and that's almost anyone), was president, there would be more money for social programs, the Pentagon budget might get cut (temporarily, but we have to take what we can), we might not be funding the Contras in Nicaragua or the death squads in El Salvador. But put solid progressives in Congress, and even Reagan can't fight the wars he wants to; elect decent people to mayoralities and city councils, and local social services would improve. But always, organize for those principles and goals you want directly. I still believe that we can't elect a new society, we have to build it starting right now, right here.

Murray Rosenblith is a member of the WRL Executive Committee.

Middle East Peace Movements *continued from page 2*

While most Americans know nothing of the Palestinian-Israeli dialog that ensued, Europeans could read about it in their daily press or observe Dr. Sartawi and Arie Eliav receiving the Bruno Kreisky peace prize on European television.

Within the Occupied Territories the struggle of the Palestinians has been to remain "steadfast," to hold on to as much of their land as possible in the face of Israeli expropriations, and to remain in Palestine rather than be forced to emmigrate by subtle and not so subtle pressures. While we know of Palestinian resistance primarily through the terrorist actions of the PLO, most of the Palestinian resistance has been waged by nonviolent means. Public demonstrations to protest the occupation, raise consciousness, and express solidarity have been the most commonly used method of resistance in the Occupied Territories. A campaign of noncooperation was used to sabatoge the "Village Leagues," an Israeli effort to create a "Quisling" leadership which would serve as an alternative to the PLO. In a region where identification papers are essential families refused to go to the Village League to obtain birth certificates for their newborn babies. Students refused to accept teachers placed in their schools to build a patronage network for the League. In actions reminiscent of our own civil rights and peace movements Palestinians have laid down in front of bulldozers, blocked roads, refused to pay taxes, and organized general strikes to oppose the occupation and some of its most oppressive manifestations. Perhaps most hopeful is the growing commitment on the part of leading Palestinians living under the occupation to dialog with the Israelis. This has been quietly supported by the PLO abroad.

Two other Middle East peace initiatives should be mentioned here. The need for confidentiality limits what I can write about the Middle East Council of Churches which is based in Beirut, but it is a remarkable institution led by a remarkable man, Rev. Gabriel Habib. Throughout a decade of some of this century's most brutal civil and international war, the Middle East Council of Churches has worked for peace. It has provided channels for warring factions to speak and negotiate with one another and has hosted countless delegations from all over the world anxious to meet with Palestinians and Lebanese. It has provided a means for Lebanese and volunteers from around the world to tend the wounded and homeless victims of the seemingly endless war of Lebanon.

The anger, anguish and frustration accumulated during nine years of civil war in Lebanon have led others to begin the dangerous process of building a Lebanese peace movement. In response to a poem written by a Lebanese teacher, thousands of children, their parents and teachers demonstrated against the Lebanese war in May. Though their organization is tenuous, it certainly represents the hopes and aspirations of middle class Lebanese.

The second initiative is one I have only read about, and would be best described as a possible peace movement in the making. A dialog is developing between European peace activists and diplomats, academics and researchers from the Arab world. While much of their dialog has focused on Europe's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict, the deployment of cruise missiles in Comiso, Italy has added a new dimension to the dialog. The cover story of a recent issue of "Middle East" magazine was "Cruise: Why the Arabs Should Worry." It quoted former President Nixon, to the effect that those who suggest that these weapons are directed at targets in north Africa and the Middle East oil fields are "one hundred per cent right." The Comiso cruise can reach Morocco, Algeria, Lybia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan and Syria but not Moscow. While it is uncertain how fears of superpower nuclear intervention will manifest themselves in the Arab world, something is beginning. A recent European-Arab "dialog for peace" recently concluded with a statement declaring opposition to the nuclearization of Europe and the Mediterranean and calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Joseph Gerson is Peace Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee in New England and a long time member of the War Resisters League.

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